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TAGS: MARR MOPS PREL PO

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL AND THE INFORMAL NATO FOREIGN MINISTERIAL

REF: SECSTATE 7434

Classified By: Pol Chief Troy Fitrell, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (U) Summary: Portugal is unlikely to make further commitments for Afghanistan given existing contributions to several overseas operations coupled with the current austerity budget. MFA staff will, however, recommend an enhanced public diplomacy effort by their principals and they look forward to discussions on enhanced counter-narcotics efforts, the OMLTs, and other issues. End summary.

Afghanistan

¶2. (U) Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Director of the NATO Policy Office Adelino Vieira da Silva noted that Portugal's existing contributions to several overseas operations coupled with the current austerity budget precluded any further commitments to Afghanistan in the short term, as requested reftel.

¶3. (C) Regarding counter-narcotics, Vieira da Silva noted that the MFA's International Organizations Bureau is reviewing various proposed contributions, including eradication efforts, but that no decision has been made. He continued, however, that the MFA looks forward to reviewing proposals to enhance the counter-narcotics portion of the NATO/ISAF operational plan, noting that criminal activity was an integral part of the violence and instability in Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) As his office was responsible for the first draft of the Minister's remarks, Vieira da Silva was interested in an enhanced public diplomacy program. Vieira da Silva agreed that few Portuguese citizens understood the reasons behind Portugal's commitment to ISAF and that the failure to engage the public would be magnified in the event of a tragedy involving Portuguese soldiers. For that reason, he said that he would recommend to the Foreign Minister's staff that the Minister expand his outreach efforts regarding the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

¶5. (C) Vieira da Silva was impressed by the concept of the Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams (OMLT). Admitting that he was unfamiliar with the specific proposal, he agreed that it appeared to be an excellent way to maximize the value of a state's contributions. Vieira da Silva promised to research the proposal more thoroughly so that the Government of Portugal could make an informed decision.

Kosovo

¶6. (C) Vieira da Silva noted that the ministerial would discuss Kosovo as well. He believed that the compromise brokered by Ahtisaari was a good one, albeit years too late. He worried that Russia would accept the proposal, but then work to undermine it in the future. Moreover, he worried that Russia would likely use the idea of limitations on

sovereignty as a tool for its own conflict regions.

NATO Summit Host

¶7. (C) Vieira da Silva also brought up the issue of hosting the next NATO Summit. He suggested that, since Portugal has a solid majority of member states supporting its candidacy, that the decision be worked out quietly and soon to avoid any appearance of discord within NATO.

Comment

¶8. (U) Portugal's ISAF contributions have been justifiably lauded by President Bush and allied commanders, but the Portuguese are stretched by other commitments in Kosovo, East Timor, Lebanon, and elsewhere. While we do not expect major force or financial contributions to be forthcoming, the OMLT concept may be a way to take advantage of Portuguese experience and expertise.

¶9. (U) Portuguese officials at all levels continue to press Portugal's candidacy to host the 2008 NATO Summit. In response, we have indicated that USG support for Romania's candidacy remains unchanged.

Hoffman